(Could use stock footage or film made another mill as background for handling excerpts @ top of each act)
(also each with relevant V-O into each segment)

Smoke Nights

SMOKE AND STEEL

Smoke of the fields in spring is one,
Smoke of the leaves in autumn another.
Smoke of a steel-mill roof or a battleship funnel,
They all go up in a line with a smokestack,
Or they twist . . . in the slow twist . . . of the wind.

If the north wind comes they run to the south.
If the west wind comes they run to the east.
By this sign
all smokes
know each other.
Smoke of the fields in spring and leaves in autumn,
Smoke of the finished steel, chilled and blue,
By the oath of work they swear: "I know you."

Hunted and hissed from the center
Deep down long ago when God made us over,
Deep down are the cinders we came from—
You and I and our heads of smoke.

. . . . . .

Some of the smokes God dropped on the job
Cross on the sky and count our years
And sing in the secrets of our numbers;
Sing their dawns and sing their evenings,
Sing an old log-fire song:
You may put the damper up,
You may put the damper down,
The smoke goes up the chimney just the same.

Smoke of a city sunset skyline,
Smoke of a country dusk horizon—
They cross on the sky and count our years.

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Smoke of a brick-red dust
Winds on a spiral
Out of the stacks
For a hidden and glimpsing moon.
This, said the bar-iron shed to the blooming mill,
This is the slang of coal and steel.
The day-gang hands it to the night-gang,
The night-gang hands it back.

Stammer at the slang of this—
Let us understand half of it.
In the rolling mills and sheet mills,
In the harr and boom of the blast fires,
The smoke changes its shadow
And men change their shadow;
A nigger, a wop, a bohunk changes.

A bar of steel—it is only
Smoke at the heart of it, smoke and the blood of a man.
A runner of fire ran in it, ran out, ran somewhere else,
And left—smoke and the blood of a man
And the finished steel, chilled and blue.
So fire runs in, runs out, runs somewhere else again,
And the bar of steel is a gun, a wheel, a nail, a shovel,
A rudder under the sea, a steering-gear in the sky;
And always dark in the heart and through it,
Smoke and the blood of a man.
Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Gary—they make their steel with men.

In the blood of men and the ink of chimneys
The smoke nights write their oaths:
Smoke into steel and blood into steel;
Homestead, Braddock, Birmingham, they make their steel with men.
Smoke and blood is the mix of steel.

The birdmen drone
in the blue; it is steel
a motor sings and zooms.

Steel barbwire around The Works.
Steel guns in the holsters of the guards at the gates of The Works.
Steel ore-boats bring the loads clawed from the earth by steel, lifted and lugged by arms of steel, sung on its way by the clanking clam-shells.
The runners now, the handlers now, are steel; they dig and clutch and haul; they hoist their automatic knuckles from job to job; they are steel making steel.
Fire and dust and air fight in the furnaces; the pour is timed, the billets wriggle; the clinkers are dumped:
Liners on the sea, skyscrapers on the land; diving steel in the sea, climbing steel in the sky.

Finders in the dark, you Steve with a dinner bucket, you Steve clumping in the dusk on the sidewalks with an evening paper for the woman and kids, you Steve with your head wondering where we all end up—
Finders in the dark, Steve: I hook my arm in cinder sleeves; we go down the street together; it is all the same to us; you Steve and the rest of us end on the same stars; we all wear a hat in hell together, in hell or heaven.

Smoke nights now, Steve.
Smoke, smoke, lost in the sieves of yesterday;
Dumped again to the scoops and hooks today.
Smoke like the clocks and whistles, always.
Smoke nights now.
Tomorrow something else.

Luck moons come and go:
Five men swim in a pot of red steel.
Their bones are kneaded into the bread of steel:
Their bones are knocked into coils and anvils
And the sucking plungers of sea-fighting turbines.
Look for them in the woven frame of a wireless station.
So ghosts hide in steel like heavy-armed men in mirrors.

Peepers, skulkers—they shadow-dance in laughing tombs.
They are always there and they never answer.

One of them said: "I like my job, the company is good to me, America is a wonderful country."
One: "Jesus, my bones ache; the company is a liar; this is a free country, like hell."
One: "I got a girl, a peach; we save up and go on a farm and raise pigs and be the boss ourselves."
And the others were roughneck singers a long ways from home.
Look for them back of a steel vault door.

They laugh at the cost.
They lift the birdmen into the blue.
It is steel a motor sings and zooms.

In the subway plugs and drums,
In the slow hydraulic drills, in gumbo or gravel,
Under dynamo shafts in the webs of armature spiders.
They shadow-dance and laugh at the cost.

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The ovens light a red dome.
Spools of fire wind and wind.
Quadrangles of crimson sputter.
The lashes of dying maroon let down.
Fire and wind wash out the slag.
Forever the slag gets washed in fire and wind.
The anthem learned by the steel is:
Do this or go hungry.
Look for our rust on a plow.
Listen to us in a threshing-engine razz.
Look at our job in the running wagon wheat.

. . . . . .

Fire and wind wash at the slag.
Box-cars, clocks, steam-shovels, churns, pistons, boilers, scissors—
Oh, the sleeping slag from the mountains, the slag-heavy pig-iron will go down many roads.
Men will stab and shoot with it, and make butter and tunnel rivers, and mow hay in swaths, and slit hogs and skin beeves, and steer airplanes across North America, Europe, Asia, round the world.

Hacked from a hard rock country, broken and baked in mills and smelters,
the rusty dust waits
Till the clean hard weave of its atoms cripples and blunts the drills chewing a hole in it.
The steel of its plinths and flanges is reckoned, O God, in one-millionth of an inch.

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Once when I saw the curves of fire, the rough scarf women dancing,
Dancing out of the flues and smokestacks—flying hair of fire, flying feet upside down;
Buckets and baskets of fire exploding and chortling, fire running wild out of the steady and fastened ovens;
Sparks cracking a harr-harr-huff from a solar-plexus of rock-ribs of the earth taking a laugh for themselves;
Ears and noses of fire, gibbering gorilla arms of fire, gold mud-pies, gold bird-wings, red jackets riding purple mules, scarlet autocrats tumbling from the humps of camels, assassinated czars straddling vermilion balloons;
I saw then the fires flash one by one: good-by: then smoke, smoke;
And in the screens the great sisters of night and cool stars, sitting women arranging their hair,
Waiting in the sky, waiting with slow easy eyes, waiting and half-murmuring:
"Since you know all
and I know nothing,
tell me what I dreamed last night."

. . . . . .

Pearl cobwebs in the windy rain,
in only a flicker of wind,
are caught and lost and never known again.

A pool of moonshine comes and waits,
but never waits long: the wind picks up
loose gold like this and is gone.

A bar of steel sleeps and looks slant-eyed
on the pearl cobwebs, the pools of moonshine;
sleeps slant-eyed a million years,
sleeps with a coat of rust, a vest of moths,
a shirt of gathering sod and loam.

The wind never bothers . . . a bar of steel.
The wind picks only . . . pearl cobwebs . . . pools of moonshine.

FIVE TOWNS ON THE B. AND O.

By day . . . tireless smokestacks . . . hungry smoky shanties hanging to the slopes . . . crooning:
We get by, that's all.
By night . . . all lit up . . . fire-gold bars, fire-gold flues . . . and the shanties shaking in clumsy shadows . . . almost the hills shaking . . . all crooning: By God, we're going to find out or know why.

WORK GANGS

Box cars run by a mile long.
And I wonder what they say to each other
When they stop a mile long on a sidetrack.
Maybe their chatter goes:
I came from Fargo with a load of wheat up to the danger line.
I came from Omaha with a load of shorthorns and they splintered my boards.
I came from Detroit heavy with a load of flivvers.
I carried apples from the Hood River last year and this year bunches of bananas from Florida; they look for me with watermelons from Mississippi next year.

Hammers and shovels of work gangs sleep in shop corners
when the dark stars come on the sky and the night watchmen walk and look.

Then the hammer heads talk to the handles,
then the scoops of the shovels talk,
how the day's work nicked and trimmed them,
how they swung and lifted all day,
how the hands of the work gangs smelled of hope.
In the night of the dark stars
when the curve of the sky is a work gang handle,
in the night on the mile long sidetracks,

in the night where the hammers and shovels sleep in corners,
the night watchmen stuff their pipes with dreams—
and sometimes they doze and don't care for nothin',
and sometimes they search their heads for meanings, stories, stars.

The stuff of it runs like this:

A long way we come; a long way to go; long rests and long deep sniffs for our lungs on the way.

Sleep is a belonging of all; even if all songs are old songs and the singing heart is snuffed out like a switchman's lantern with the oil gone, even if we forget our names and houses in the finish, the secret of sleep is left us, sleep belongs to all, sleep is the first and last and best of all.

People singing; people with song mouths connecting with song hearts; people who must sing or die; people whose song hearts break if there is no song mouth; these are my people.

PENNSYLVANIA

I HAVE been in Pennsylvania,
In the Monongahela and the Hocking Valleys.

In the blue Susquehanna
On a Saturday morning
I saw the mounted constabulary go by,
I saw boys playing marbles.
Spring and the hills laughed.

And in places
Along the Appalachian chain,
I saw steel arms handling coal and iron,
And I saw the white-cauliflower faces
Of miners' wives waiting for the men to come home from the day's work.

I made color studies in crimson and violet
Over the dust and domes of culm at sunset.

then to say over slow and say over slow wise, keen, beautiful words masking a heart that's breaking, breaking,
This is something that calls and calls to their blood.
They are acting when they talk about it and they know it is acting to be particular about it and yet: They all want to play Hamlet.

THE MAYOR OF GARY

I ASKED the Mayor of Gary about the 12-hour day and the 7-day week.
And the Mayor of Gary answered more workmen steal time on the job in Gary than any other place in the United States.
"Go into the plants and you will see men sitting around doing nothing—machinery does everything," said the Mayor of Gary when I asked him about the 12-hour day and the 7-day week.
And he wore cool cream pants, the Mayor of Gary, and white shoes, and a barber had fixed him up with a shampoo and a shave and he was easy and imperturbable though the government weather bureau thermometer said 96 and children were soaking their heads at bubbling fountains on the street corners.
And I said good-by to the Mayor of Gary and I went out from the city hall and turned the corner into Broadway.
And I saw workmen wearing leather shoes scruffed with fire and cinders, and pitted with little holes from running molten steel,
And some had bunches of specialized muscles around their shoulder blades hard as pig iron, muscles of their forearms were sheet steel and they looked to me like men who had been somewhere.

[GARY, INDIANA, 1915]

OMAHA

RED barns and red heifers spot the green
grass circles around Omaha—the farmers
haul tanks of cream and wagon loads of
cheese.

Shale hogbacks across the river at Council
Bluffs—and shanties hang by an eyelash to
the hill slants back around Omaha.